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Student Relates Trials in Rhodesia

They went to Africa to help the natives but were accused by the British of being CIA agents. They wanted to build a school but ended up building tennis courts and a chapel out of an ant hill. These problems were recalled by Bruce Miller, a student from Lewiston, in a talk to the Rotary Club of Niagara Falls Monday at the Hotel Niagara.

Mr. Miller talked of his experiences last summer on work projects sponsored by the National Crossroads Africa in northern Rhodesia. This is a non-governmental operation emphasizing person-to-person contact to supplement the State Department's country-to-country relations, Mr. Miller told the Rotarians. He was one of 280 Americans and Canadians, mostly college students, engaged in 15 work projects in Africa last summer.

Mr. Miller, in a group of 10 under one leader, was first sent to help students at an African teachers' training school to add a dining room to the school facilities. The British government suspected them of being CIA agents, he said, so the bricks and cement never arrived. They scrounged up materials for three tennis courts instead, the student said.

He was not particularly disturbed by this as the success of the work projects, he said, is measured more in terms of human relationships developed than physical structures completed.

During the summer Mr. Miller and the others shared quarters with African "roommates."

The summer's second project was to fashion a chapel out of a 40-foot hard clay ant-hill vacated by a colony of enterprising ants. This took place near the Congo border.

Besides the tennis courts and the chapel, the fruits of

the summer's work lay in the communication that evolved between whites and Africans as a result of living and working together, he said. And the British government, he added, became convinced the students were not CIA agents.

Mr. Miller said he was bothered by evidence of the African policies of "apartheid" or segregation. When one African white woman saw the American girls working together with colored students, she nudged her husband and said "someday they will have us doing that," the Lewiston student related.

He was encouraged, however, he said, by the attitude of some progressive businessmen near the Congo border who were taking the intelligent Africans from the copper mines and training them for office work.

Philosophizing for a moment, Mr. Miller said he does not understand the causes for segregation in Africa. He said antagonism has caused suppression by the dominant white minority, aspirations by the black man exceeding his present educational level or political capabilities and the undesired imposition of reforms by idealistic whites.

Mr. Miller, born in Niagara Falls, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Miller, 235 N. 3rd St., Lewiston. He attended Lewiston-Porter High School and was graduated from Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., this month. He will enter Albany Medical College this fall.

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